

Don writes by e-mail: *“I purchased a 2002 Dodge Dakota recently with low miles. I checked the brake pads and shoes to see if they needed replacement. They were ok. My problem is the right front caliper does not retract properly and therefore sticks, causing the pads to burn. I have used high - temperature lubrication on the caliper pins, and this alleviates the problem for about 4 or 5 days. The left caliper does not cause a problem. Do I need to replace the caliper, and if so, do I need to replace both of them? Is this a common problem?”*

Halderman: It sounds like the piston inside the caliper is stuck. Yes, this is a common problem. Most of the time the problem is caused by, as you thought, sticking caliper guides. These can stick due to rust and corrosion. Ohio winters do include snow and that usually means salt is used on the roads leading to corrosion of metal parts, especially under the vehicle. I suggest that you replace both calipers. Another possible cause is a restricted brake line. These can cause the caliper piston to stick also. Therefore, to be assured that the problem is solved, the best approach would be to replace both calipers and both flexible brake lines.

Wheels: *Is there anything Don can do to help prevent this from occurring again?*

Halderman: No, there is not much that can be done except to have the brakes checked regularly to help prevent the sticking brakes from causing more harm. For example, if Don had not checked his brakes, the sticking caliper could have caused the brake pads to wear a lot sooner than normal. Then, if the brake pads were not replaced, the brake rotors can be worn, which often requires replacement. Even though a regular brake inspection may cost some money, it is often money well spent and can help prevent expensive major brake repairs in the future. Regular brake inspections usually include the following:

- Brake fluid level and condition inspection
- Removing all four wheels and performing a visual inspection of the all four wheel brakes
- Checking the condition and thickness of the brake pads, rotors, and drums.

A thorough test drive

